The Director of Central Intelligence Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #05011-86 30 October 1986

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Director of Central Intelligence

Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM:

Fritz W. Ermarth

National Intelligence Officer for USSR

SUBJECT:

Revised Talking Points on the Expulsion Round

l. Attached is a revised set of points on this subject, modified slightly in response to comment by

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- 2. These points can be used when you meet with PFIAB next week. However, you will probably wish to gloss over the more negative political judgments toward the end of the paper, partly because they are pretty speculative. I include them because they may be useful points to make in other settings, to make sure we think through the likely Soviet political perceptions if we get into something like this again.
- 3. I've deleted most specific numbers at Bill's suggestion. They are not needed to make the arguments. And accurate numbers are hard to nail down

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4. Under the subhead "Image and Credibility" you will find a reference to "unusual channels of communication." I assume you know what this refers to. If not, I can tell you what I know orally.

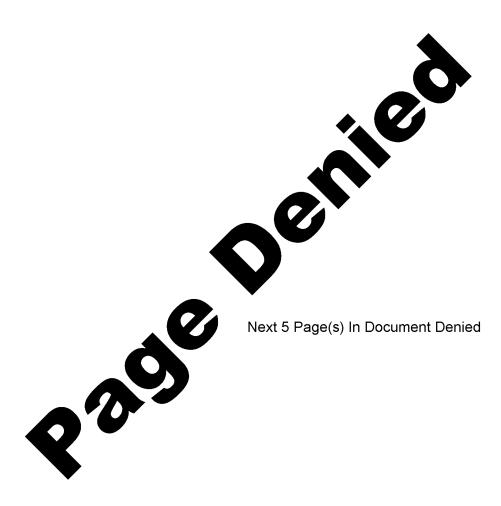
Fortz W. Ermarth

Attachment: As stated

cc: NIO/FDIA DC/SE/DDO C/CI/DDO

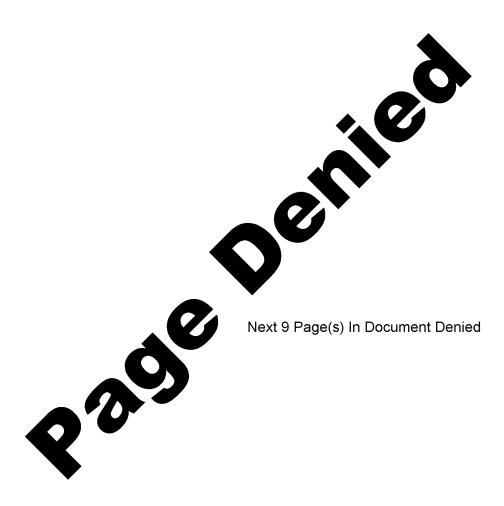
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News Bulletin The Washington Post

29 October 1986 Item No. 1

Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

'Blinded' Satellites

High-powered Soviet ground-to-space microwaves have disabled U.S. reconnaissance satellites on more than one occasion in the past six months, a space-war breakthrough causing concern among intelligence officials because of the present inability to launch new spies-in-the-sky.

At best, the Soviet capacity to "blind" a satellite in synchronous (stationary) orbit 23,000 miles in space raises an elemental question of sincerity about Mikhail Gorbachev's claim that President Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative is bellicose and provocative. Trying to choke the U.S. program, the Soviets are doing well maintaining their own.

At worst, this space-war success combined with the U.S. space shuttle tragedy and the failure of other attempts to launch satellites endanger the United States at a time of maximum Soviet pressure against SDI. The danger was foreseen in a top-secret 1980 report to Reagan warning that the United States could be "completely blinded" by the mid-1980s.

The successful Soviet effort to disable American satellites has been accomplished by "propagating" high-powered microwaves fired from a ground station located near Dushanbe, close to the Afghan border in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Tadzhikistan. When the beam of the short-wave electromagnetic pulse strikes, the satellite is unable either to receive orders from the United States or to transmit the all-important pictures that are the heart of U.S. intelligence-gathering.

In addition to this microwave bombardment. the Soviets have also had some success attacking American satellites with ground-based lasers. Intelligence specialists told us these laser transmitters are located in Moscow, at the big Soviet nuclear station in Saryshagan and at one other unidentified place.

The intelligence community believes laser attack has damaged several satellites. If so, that may mean that as of today U.S. satellite reconnaissance of the Soviet Union is limited to little more than one or two undamaged "cameras-in-the-sky," with the future uncertain.

The importance of now-imperiled existing satellites to report on offensive and defensive Soviet space and ground-based military operations is paramount. There is no apparent means available for months to launch another spy satellite. The old satellite-launching Titan missiles became obsolete with development of the shuttle. Some

Titans kept in reserve have exploded this year on their pads or in early flight.

The irony of the successful Soviet assaults on American satellites is their convergence with Gorbachev's unprecedented nuclear arms-reduction "offer" to induce the president to give up SDI. Gorbachev's goal, in the view of administration strategic analysts, has now become clear. He is pressing full speed ahead to develop the Soviets' own war-in-space program and doing so under cover of an attempted U.S. satellite blackout. He also is building worldwide fear of "Star Wars" to force the president to kill SDI.

The secret transition report to Reagan immediately following the 1980 election warned with gloomy precision about the dangers of the space-warfare race—particularly the importance and vulnerability of satellites in keeping tabs on Soviet gains.

"The failure of a single launch in the early to mid-1980s could negate all our capabilities [for satellite reconnaissance) for a protracted period of time," the report warned. Such a failure, it went on, "could be disastrous for the entire technical collection effort" leading to the United States' being "completely blinded." That could

eliminate photoreconnaissance capability by mid-

That is not far from what has now happened. but not even the prophetic authors of the transition report knew six years ago how rapid would be Soviet antisatellite technology.

It is this pessimistic backdrop that has caused some of the president's strongest admirers to question his willingness to make any concessions at all to Gorbachev on developing antimissile defenses or space-warfare technology. They say privately that he is not informed about Soviet advances and that he does not understand the double-edged Gorbachev game: stall U.S. technological progress and move full speed on his own.

An incident just before Reagan went to Reykjavik enforced this critical view. A report from the CIA representing the entire intelligence community was sent to the Oval Office with this unequivocal warning: the sole reason for Gorbachev's wanting the Iceland summit was to offer unprecedented inducements for Reagan to drop SDI. The warning was ignored. There was no White House response at all.

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